

Minnesota Senate



Minnesota House of Representatives

July 11, 2017

The Honorable Rick Nolan
United States House of Representatives
2366 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Via email: Will.Mitchell@mail.house.gov

Dear Congressman Nolan:

As the leaders of our caucuses in the Minnesota Legislature, we write to you in support of your bill, H.R. 3115, the Superior National Forest Land Exchange Act of 2017.

A comprehensive environmental review of the NorthMet Mining Project and Land Exchange under the National Environmental Policy Act and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act was completed more than 18 months ago. The Final Environmental Impact Statement subsequently was validated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The U.S. Forest Service, in its January 2017 final Record of Decision (ROD) on this matter, states that this land exchange is in the public interest and should occur. Unfortunately, the land exchange still has not been finalized.

As you know, under H.R. 3115 and as outlined in the ROD, the Forest Service would get 6,690 acres of private lands that would further the goals of the Superior National Forest Plan. These lands have higher public values than the existing federal land for open space conservation, wetland preservation, wildlife, and public recreational use. In exchange, PolyMet would get 6,650 acres of federal surface land on which PolyMet owns and controls the underlying private minerals. This land is largely landlocked by surrounding private lands, lacks road or other public overland access, and has a lower value than the land PolyMet would be exchanging.

The land gained by the Forest Service in this exchange is valued at \$415,000 higher than the land it currently owns. Under current law, the United States is required to pay the difference in value to PolyMet. However, this bill expressly states PolyMet will forgo that payment, a move that further benefits the country's taxpayers.

We support your efforts to bring closure and certainty to this process through Congressional action, and strongly urge rapid passage of the enabling legislation through the U.S. Congress. Please let us know if we can be of any further assistance in moving this matter forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Gazelka". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" being more prominent than the last name "Gazelka".

Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kurt Daudt". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Kurt" being more prominent than the last name "Daudt".

Speaker of the House Kurt Daudt

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Bakk". The script is cursive, with the first name "Thomas" being more prominent than the last name "Bakk".

Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk